



DG ECHO

Reports on food security

Release n° 7 – March 2024

Directorate-General for European Civil
Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations

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Table of Contents

Executive summary	7
1. Spotlight topics	9
1.1. Food crises under the radar.....	9
1.2. The funding gap in humanitarian food assistance	9
2. DG ECHO key policy messages	12
3. Geographical Focus	13
3.1. West and Central Africa.....	13
3.1.1. Burkina Faso	13
3.1.2. Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)	15
3.1.3. Chad.....	16
3.1.4. Mali.....	18
3.1.5. Niger.....	19
3.1.6. Nigeria	21
3.2. East and Southern Africa.....	22
3.2.1. Ethiopia	22
3.2.2. South Sudan.....	24
3.2.3. Sudan.....	26
3.3. Middle East and North Africa (MENA).....	27
3.3.1. Occupied Palestinian Territories	27
3.3.2. Syria	29
3.3.3. Yemen	31
3.4. Asia and Pacific.....	33
3.4.1. Afghanistan	33
3.4.2. Myanmar	35
3.4.3. Pakistan.....	36

List of Organisations

DG ECHO	Directorate General for Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid
DG INTPA	Directorate General for International Partnerships
DG NEAR	Directorate General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (UK)
GNFC	Global Network against Food Crises
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IFRC	International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
MdM	Médecins du Monde
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OXFAM	Oxford Committee for Famine Relief
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WFP	World Food Program

List of acronyms

CCCM	Camp Coordination and Camp Management
COHAFA	Council working party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid
CVA	Cash and Voucher Assistance
DREF	Disaster Response Emergency Fund
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EDF	European Development Fund
EiE	Education in Emergencies
ERP	Emergency Response Plan
FSL	Food Security and Livelihoods
GFD	General Food Distribution
GRFC	Global Report on Food Crises

HIP	Humanitarian Implementation Plan
HDP	Humanitarian – Development – Peace nexus
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IPC/CH	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
MAM	Moderate Acute Malnutrition
MEB	Minimum Expenditure Basket
MPCT	Multi-purpose Cash Transfer
MSNA	Multi-Sector Needs Assessment
PLW	Pregnant Lactating Women
RHD	Refugee Hosting District
RMRP	Refugee and Migrant Response Plan
RPCA	Food Crisis Prevention Network
RRM	Rapid Response Mechanism
SAM	Severe Acute Malnutrition
SEAR	Solidarity and Emergency Aid Reserve
SMEB	Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket

Executive summary

Global food insecurity remains at worrying levels. According to 2023's Global Report on Food Crises, in 2022 there were 258 million acutely food-insecure people requiring urgent food assistance in 58 food-crisis countries – a historic maximum. In 2023, the main drivers behind acute food insecurity – conflict, weather extremes and economic shocks - persisted and, in some instances, intensified, suggesting that the situation is not improving. **The outlook for 2024 is bleak.**

Against this backdrop, **this report aims to accomplish several objectives.** Firstly, to raise awareness and provide detailed information on the situation in the countries and regions of maximum concern from a food security perspective during the September 2023 – January 2024 period. Secondly, to outline DG ECHO's interventions to meet rising humanitarian food assistance needs. Thirdly, **the release of this report coincides with the third European Humanitarian Forum**, with the funding gap and forgotten crises as overarching themes. This report explores these from a food security lens. Finally, the report puts forward key policy messages and recommendations, both general and country-specific, to step up the fight against food insecurity.

The latest Hunger Hotspots report, published on 31 October 2024, warned that acute food insecurity was likely to deteriorate further in 18 hunger hotspots, **with five countries or territories at risk of famine: Burkina Faso, Mali, Sudan, South Sudan and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.** **Conflict and violence is the main driver behind food insecurity** in these hotspots and in all the countries analysed in this new edition of DG ECHO's food security report. Since we published our last report in September 2023, the escalation of conflict and hostilities has further exacerbated food insecurity in some of these contexts.

In the Occupied Palestinian Territories, the IPC/CH¹ analysis conducted in December 2023 highlighted that over 90% of the population in the Gaza Strip (about 2.08 million people) were suffering acute levels of food insecurity (IPC/CH Phase 3 or above). Hostilities have left the entire population highly food insecure and at **risk of famine.** **In Sudan**, intense conflict and organized violence have driven approximately 17.7 million Sudanese (37% of the population) acutely food insecure between October 2023 and February 2024, the **highest level of acute food insecurity on record** for the same period after the harvest in Sudan.

Economic shocks remain a prominent driver of hunger. The economic resilience of poor countries has dramatically decreased and they now face extended recovery periods and have less ability to cope with future shocks. The impact of **Russia's invasion of Ukraine** on global food insecurity continues to persist through its ripple effect on trade and food prices. Many countries are affected by high inflation, notably on food prices, and debt stress. Examples include Pakistan where, in just a year, the Pakistani Rupee has depreciated by more than 20% against the US dollar. There is also concern and uncertainty about the potential economic implications of **Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali's** recent announcement of their **withdrawal from** the Economic Community of West African States (**ECOWAS**).

Climate change and related weather extremes remain a key driver of food insecurity in many of the countries under analysis. **The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has suffered the worst floods in decades.** Excessive rainfall led to flooding of crops and loss of planted areas in different provinces at the beginning of the agricultural season while, in January, the Congo River overflowed, flooding the capital, Kinshasa. The ongoing **El Niño is expected to continue at least until June 2024**, increasing the risk of heatwaves, wildfires, floods, droughts, and epidemics.

This is further detailed and analysed in the **15 country fiches included in the report.**

¹ Integrated Phase Classification / Cadre Harmonisé (see beginning of Section 3 for more details).

These include the five countries and territories at risk of famine mentioned above, namely Burkina Faso, Mali, Sudan, South Sudan and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. In addition to these, the report also covers the countries with the highest number of acutely food insecure people: Chad, Niger, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Syria, Yemen, Afghanistan, Myanmar and Pakistan.

Beyond these countries, **the report draws attention to the millions of people worldwide who suffer from starvation without making the headlines.** Some of the world's worst food crises are unfolding in the shadows, forgotten by international media and donors, leading to a lack of funding and efforts to address their situation. The report provides recent examples of the **EU's commitment to helping the most vulnerable people affected by these "forgotten crises"**.

The second spotlight topic of this report delves into **the widening gap between needs and resources needed to tackle food crises.** The report highlights the funding drop in 2023, its consequences, the weak outlook for 2024, and the need to do more with less coupled with increased efforts to address the root causes of food insecurity.

Finally, against this challenging background, **the report includes both concise and detailed policy and advocacy recommendations to enhance efforts in addressing food crises.** These span from practical suggestions to accelerate the effectiveness and efficiency of food crises responses to the necessity of intensifying multilateral efforts to uphold International Humanitarian Law, and the pressing need to identify and leverage Nexus opportunities to tackle the root causes of food crises.

1. Spotlight topics

1.1. Food crises under the radar

Millions of people worldwide suffer from starvation out of the spotlight. Some of the world's worst food crises are unfolding in the shadows, forgotten by international media and donors, leading to a lack of funding and efforts to address their situation.

DG ECHO defines a “forgotten crisis” as a severe, protracted humanitarian crisis where people receive insufficient or no international aid. This is generally due to a lack of political engagement, often associated with low visibility in the media. Many of the worst food crises fall in this category.

The EU is committed to helping the most vulnerable people affected by these “forgotten crises”. As a global, principled donor, we allocate at least 15% of our initial annual humanitarian budget to forgotten crises².

In 2023, over one fourth of the EU humanitarian food assistance (around EUR 175 million) was distributed in “forgotten crises”. This includes some of our largest food assistance interventions like the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan, Nigeria, Lebanon, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso or Mali.

In the **Democratic Republic of the Congo** (DRC), for example, DG ECHO was a key actor in supporting the IASC "System-Wide Scale-Up" declared in June 2023 to intensify the humanitarian operations in several key sectors, including food assistance. We allocated around EUR 100 million to the humanitarian response to finance multi-sectoral projects, including around EUR 31 million for food security and nutrition. In 2024, food assistance will remain one of the most important areas considering the critical needs in the country.

In **South Sudan**, DG ECHO allocated close to EUR 28 million to food security and nutrition interventions in 2023, which represents 30% of the total humanitarian aid budget for South Sudan for that year. The 2024 HIP has an initial budget of EUR 49.5 million, of which a similar 30% is expected to be allocated to food assistance and basic needs. Due to the severity of the crisis, and the magnitude of the funding gap, DG ECHO (like other humanitarian actors, such as WFP) concentrates its food assistance in areas classified in IPC/CH phases 4 and 5 with the highest proportion of people in need of humanitarian assistance, covering 50 to 70% of the survival ration only.

In **Nigeria**, DG ECHO allocated around EUR 16 million to food security and nutrition interventions in 2023. Under the 2024 HIP, EUR 31.5 million have been initially allocated to support a multi-sectoral humanitarian response. Considering the critical food security needs in the country, food assistance will remain one of the priority sectors. The EU is one of the leading voices in humanitarian advocacy on the Northwest, affected by growing violence and food and nutrition crises.

1.2. The funding gap in humanitarian food assistance

Financial flows in 2022 and outlook for 2023-24

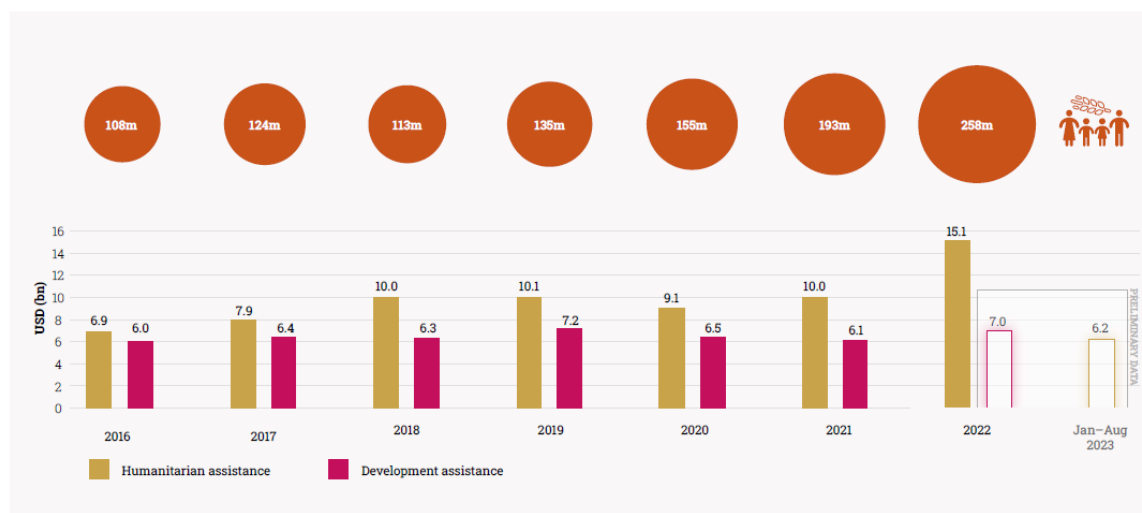
2022 saw a **seven-year high** in allocations to food sectors in food crisis countries and

² To identify “forgotten crises”, the EU follows a methodology factoring in the level of risk, crisis severity, media coverage, level of humanitarian aid per capita, as well as a qualitative assessment by Commission experts. The list of forgotten crises and more details about this methodology can be found [here](#).

territories, according to the 2023 Financing Flows and Food Crises (FFCC) report, with humanitarian funding registering a 51% increase compared to 2021. Concurrently, acute food insecurity levels peaked in 2022, with an all-time high of 258 million people facing crisis or worse conditions (IPC/CH Phase 3 or above or equivalent) in a total of 58 countries and territories. The surge in humanitarian funding for food crises also led to an annual 13% increase in terms of humanitarian food assistance per person. However, this per capita amount is slightly lower than the amount received by persons affected by acute food insecurity in 2021, and considerably lower than the average amount received during the 2016-2021 period.

This suggests that, **despite the remarkable collective efforts to step up resources to fight food crises in 2022, funding struggles to keep pace with the growing food assistance needs.**

Figure 4: Number of people (millions) in IPC/CH Phase 3 or above,⁹ humanitarian (2016–2022 and January–August 2023 preliminary data) and development assistance (2016–2021 and 2022 preliminary data) to food sectors in food crisis countries/territories (USD billions).



⁹ FSIN and GNAFC. 2017–2023. Global Report on Food Crises 2023. Rome.

Moreover, **it is expected that the gap between needs and resources has widened further in 2023, and the outlook for 2024 is bleak.** According to data extracted from OCHA's Financial Tracking Service, only 37.4% of the funding for the food security sector requested through the United Nations Appeals and Response Plans was met, which marks a strong contrast with the 60.8% coverage observed in 2022 and sits well below the 45.1% registered in 2021. This drop in funding is taking place against the backdrop of an unprecedented food crisis which will likely continue into 2024 as the main drivers behind food insecurity, notably conflict, continue to rage.

Consequences of the funding gap

The consequences of the funding gap are being felt by partners and consequently by those affected by food crises. **Lack of appropriate funding** implies hard prioritisation decisions contingent on difficult trade-offs, with partners forced to reduce the number of people assisted or reduce the quantity of assistance, or both. This **can easily lead to a vicious cycle** where, for instance, a focus on assisting those facing starvation may come at the expense of others rapidly falling into the same category. In September 2023, a WFP analysis estimated that every 1% cut in food assistance risks pushing more than 400,000 people towards the brink of starvation. Similarly, authorities from populations affected by acute food insecurity may reject receiving aid if further cuts to assistance mean that the resulting amount is not enough to cover the most essential food needs.

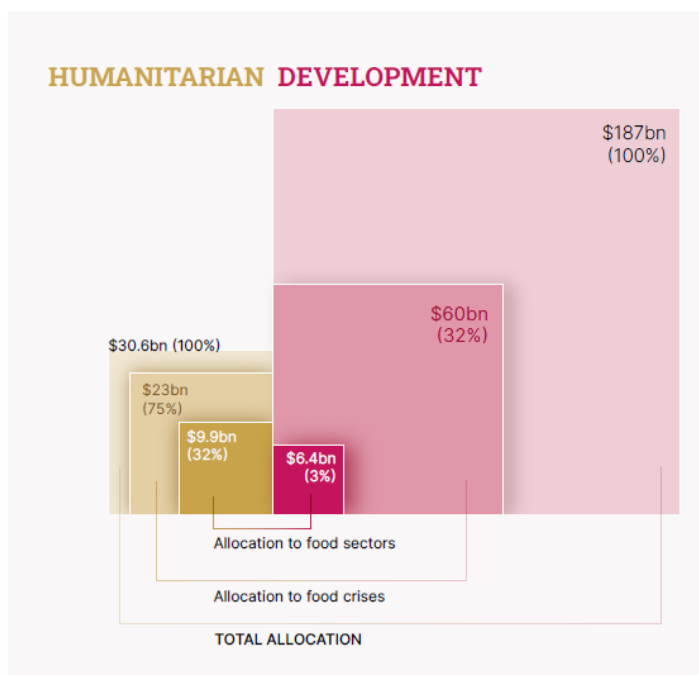
Examples of the impact on partners abound. In 2023, ICRC had to make the hard choice of closing 26 out of its 350 operations around the world and scale-back others. Due to funding shortfalls, WFP ended the General Food Assistance programme in December 2023 and will replace it with a targeted alternative set of emergency food assistance. Also in December 2023, in Yemen, lack of funding led the WFP to pause the GFA programme in areas controlled by the de facto authority, affecting around 9.5 million beneficiaries.

The funding gap calls for improved approaches to food assistance.

With funding for humanitarian food assistance consistently failing to catch up with growing needs, it is clear that there is a need to find more donors and alternative ways of funding to tackle food crises. Simultaneously, **additional efforts are needed to do more with limited resources**, finding innovative ways to work more effectively and efficiently.

The current situation is also a stark reminder of the need to address the root causes of food insecurity. As highlighted by the FFCC report, considering the increasingly protracted nature of food crises, for humanitarian assistance to effectively respond to immediate needs without being overstretched tackling protracted emergencies, long-term investments should create an enabling environment for sustainable development in food crisis contexts. However, in 2022 only 3% of the overall development funding was allocated to food sectors in countries affected by food crises, compared to 32% of global humanitarian financing. While funding allocations from development actors to food crises are considerable as a result of the overall size of development funding, normally six times higher than its humanitarian counterpart, there is an urgent need to increase development funding allocations to address the fundamentals of food insecurity in countries affected by food **crises**.

Figure 1: Humanitarian (2016–2022) and development (2016–2021) assistance (average, USD billions): total allocation; allocations to food crisis countries/territories; allocations to food sectors in food crisis countries/territories.



2. DG ECHO key policy messages

This section highlights the key policy messages and recommendations put forth by the DG ECHO field network and geographical units in section 3. '*Geographical Focus*' for this reporting period. It comprises both key policy messages common to most contexts under review and a summary of some of the more salient messages at country level.

Key policy messages **common** to most contexts affected by food crises include:

- Additional funding is needed to tackle food crises, which remain at an unprecedented scale. Most of the world's major food crises are severely underfunded and the situation risks becoming protracted, with more people facing starvation and others rapidly falling into the same category. More donors and new ways of funding are needed concurrently with additional efforts to deliver humanitarian food assistance more efficiently.
- Improved targeting practices and prioritisation of assistance is needed to ensure life-saving interventions and a consistent coverage for the most vulnerable groups.
- There is an urgent need to identify, accelerate and leverage nexus opportunities, both internally at EU level and in coordination with external actors to reinforce links between humanitarian, lifesaving operations and more long-term interventions, including resilience-oriented programming, livelihoods support activities, linkages with country-level safety nets, or restoration of basic services and trade flows.
- Higher-level efforts are needed by the international community to guarantee humanitarian access to conflict-affected areas. In this regard, a coordinated advocacy approach for the respect of IHL is paramount.
- Food assistance needs to be provided in the most efficient way possible. This implies notably to continue pushing for cash-based interventions whenever possible.

Examples of **country-specific** policy messages include:

- In Chad, support the Lean Season Response Plan of the Chadian government in areas with aggravating factors such as conflicts, floodings, or other natural disasters.
- In Ethiopia, scale up multisectoral responses including food, nutrition, health, and WASH.
- In Sudan, engage with relevant stakeholders in quantitative food security, nutrition and health analysis, including timely updates of databases for monitoring and decision-making.
- In the Occupied Palestinian Territories, humanitarian aid is insufficient to meet all the needs. Increasing commercial imports is a priority to start restoring market functionality. Livelihoods, food production, cargo movement, and distribution assets must also be protected.
- In Pakistan, explore how to support a process for enhanced shock responsiveness, in coordination with other donors and within the current Disaster Preparedness country strategy.
- In Syria, develop strategies to operate in a context of high inflation and currency depreciation, e.g. through hybrid modalities balancing cash and in-kind assistance.
- In DRC, strengthen the response by integrating protection and gender mainstreaming, as well as referral pathways towards protection actors to respond to risk exposures linked to food insecurity.
- In Mali, maintain and strengthen actions to prevent and manage malnutrition and to support livelihood recovery for the displaced, refugee and returnee populations.

3. Geographical Focus

NOTE: To describe the food insecurity status, these fiches use the Integrated Phase Classification (IPC) scale, which is the most broadly used framework. This scale classifies food insecurity in five levels (see below). Expressions like “IPC/CH 3+” are frequently used, meaning “IPC/CH phase 3 and higher”.

In West African countries, IPC/CH can be referred to as CH (Cadre Harmonisé). CH is an analogous system, considered fully compatible with IPC. Hence, CH and IPC/CH phases can be considered equivalent and are often referred to as the IPC/CH

Qualifying Levels of Acute Food Insecurity Using the Reference Table for Area Classification

Measuring Levels of Acute Food Insecurity Using the Household Food Access and Module (HAFAM)					
<div>Mild acute food insecurityHigh acute food insecurityCritical acute food insecurity</div>					
Phase name and description	Phase 1 None/Minimal	Phase 2 Stressed	Phase 3 Crisis	Phase 4 Emergency	Phase 5 Catastrophe/ Famine
	Households are able to meet essential food and non-food needs without engaging in atypical and unsustainable strategies to access food and income.	Households have minimally adequate food consumption but are unable to afford some essential non-food expenditures without engaging in stress-coping strategies.	Households either: • Have food consumption gaps that are reflected by high or above-usual acute malnutrition; or • Are marginally able to meet minimum food needs but only by depleting essential livelihood assets or through crisis-coping strategies.	Households either: • Have large food consumption gaps which are reflected in very high acute malnutrition and excess mortality; or • Are able to mitigate large food consumption gaps but only by employing emergency livelihood strategies and asset liquidation.	Households have an extreme lack of food and/ or other basic needs even after full employment of coping strategies. Starvation, death, destitution and extremely critical acute malnutrition levels are evident. (For Famine Classification, area needs to have extreme critical levels of acute malnutrition and mortality)
Priority response objectives	Action required to build resilience and for disaster risk reduction	Action required for disaster risk reduction and to protect livelihoods	Urgent action required to:		
			Protect livelihoods and reduce food consumption gaps	Save lives and livelihoods	Revert/prevent widespread death and total collapse of livelihoods

framework.

Source : IPC

3.1. West and Central Africa

3.1.1. Burkina Faso

Current situation and evolution since the last report

In Burkina Faso, despite a good agro-pastoral season, food security continues to deteriorate as access to markets and livelihood activities remains a challenge due to conflict and insecurity throughout the country.

Conflict intensified in recent months resulting in an increase in the number of civilian deaths in 2023 and populations under blockade and without food (e.g. Djibo, Solan, among others). 730 000 news IDPs were recorded in 2023, putting additional pressure on the limited number of functioning infrastructures providing essential services. Increasingly, emergency assistance must be provided by expensive helicopter operations in a context of limited resources and access. 820 865 children under 5 need treatment against acute malnutrition of which 113 627 are severely acutely malnourished.

On January 28, 2024, Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali jointly announced their withdrawal from ECOWAS. While it is early to evaluate the potential consequences of this announcement on the food security situation in Burkina Faso, exiting ECOWAS is likely to have an impact on the freedom of movement of goods and people, and impact the regional economy and politics. The country is still a member of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA), but Burkina Faso's transitional

president recently mentioned plans for a possible change of currency. Additionally, the transitional authorities are continuing their *rapprochement* with the Russian Federation: 100 military specialists out of 300 expected have already been deployed to the country.

In December 2023 (post-harvest period), the prices of cereals and legumes decreased year-on-year compared to those of 2022 but remain much higher than the average of the last 5 years: + 26% for corn, +33% for millet and +41% for sorghum. In areas under blockade by jihadist groups, food supply is irregular and delivered through military convoys. Food shortages have been reported as well as a surge in prices (55% in the Sahel and 70% in areas in the east compared to average prices in these regions). There are reports of a fall in food production or even a total absence of agro-pastoral production and other means of subsistence in blockaded areas. Furthermore, there is no regular monitoring and analysis of the evolution of basic food ration prices and the food security and nutrition situation, particularly in blockaded areas.

Access remains limited. WFP airborne operations are still subject to validation by the army and are not taking place in areas with populations in IPC/CH Phase 4. In December 2023, several flights were suspended as helicopters were attacked. A convoy of trucks escorted by the army suffered losses in early January 2024. Humanitarian actors are also subject to increasing administrative pressures and constraints. Moreover, the government has extended the ban on cash assistance to the whole country, which also affects social safety net programmes.

Food insecurity forecast

The last IPC/CH analysis of November 2023 was subject to political pressure. Many areas were not analysed and the IDP protocol was not activated. 2 278 031 people were reported to be in high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC/CH Phase 3 and above), including 261 147 in IPC/CH Phase 4. While the overall number of populations in IPC/CH Phase 3 and above has decreased, this has been an uneven fall as the number of those experiencing IPC/CH Phase 3 has increased in 25 provinces, while those in IPC/CH Phase 4 went up in five. Moreover, six provinces classified last year in IPC/CH Phase 2 are now classified as IPC/CH Phase 3.

FEWS NET, the Famine Early Warning Systems Network associated with USAID, warned in December 2023 of a risk of famine in Djibo municipality. FEWS NET was summoned by the authorities and USAID decided to suspend its activities in Burkina Faso.

The outlook for food security in the coming months is dim. The provisional assessment of the lean response reveals significant gaps especially in the most food insecure areas both in terms of magnitude and severity. In 2023, only 69% of populations in IPC/CH Phase 3 and above received some form of assistance, 22.5% less than in 2022. Despite its logistical resources, only 47% of the sites planned for the lean season were able to receive all three scheduled WFP distributions.

Overview of DG ECHO and EU response

- EUR 26.95 million are allocated under the 2024 HIP to support a multi-sectoral humanitarian response. Selection of proposals is still ongoing, but humanitarian food assistance will be one of the most important areas funded considering the critical needs in the country.
- The EU is a leading actor in diplomacy and coordinated humanitarian advocacy (Global Network Against Food Crises, the OECD and the Club du Sahel, Food Crisis Prevention Network bi-annual meeting), where the food insecurity crisis and related drivers are emphasised along with the underfunded response.
- DG ECHO Country Office has a well-established political and humanitarian diplomacy dialogue with ECOWAS, the World Bank, the African Development Bank and the International Monetary Fund in critical areas including access to land, International Humanitarian Law and civil-military coordination.

Key recommendations and policy/advocacy messages

- To increase efforts and advocacy for more secure road access (and without collateral civilian damage), and for more efficient emergency and post-emergency assistance.
- More effective nexus funding for basic need services and food security in the most fragile areas (versus a total abandonment of these areas) is needed.

3.1.2. Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)*Current situation and evolution since the last report*

25,4 million people in the DRC were estimated to be experiencing high levels of acute food insecurity according to the last IPC/CH analysis published in September 2023 covering the June-December 2023 period. The analysis showed that 25.4 million people (23% of the population analysed) were experiencing high levels of acute food insecurity, classified in IPC/CH Phase 3 or above (crisis or worse). The number of people in IPC/CH Phase 3 or above decreased compared to the previous analysis, but the situation remains worrying.

Food security continues to deteriorate rapidly for the nearly 1,6 million people displaced by the ongoing conflict with the rebel group M23 in the provinces of North and South Kivu and Ituri. The situation in the provincial capital of Goma has not changed and remains precarious. The basic needs in terms of food security, health, WASH and shelter remain enormous while food security actors including WFP are making efforts to mainstream gender and protection considerations into all interventions.

The 2023-2024 agricultural season began in October 2023 with erratic rainfall. Excessive rainfall at the beginning of the season led to flooding of crops and loss of planted areas, particularly in the provinces of Tshopo, South and North Ubangi, Kwilu, Lomami, Kasai and South Kivu, where river levels and water tables rose, flooding almost all riverine and lowland crops. Harvests expected at the end of the season are likely to be lower than in previous seasons, affecting access to food for households in these areas.

According to the World Bank, in 2023 the inflation rate for the Congolese franc was 23%, above the projected annual target of 20.8%. Fortunately, market prices for the main food staples remained stable in December 2023 compared to the previous two months. It should be noted, however, that the prices of basic foodstuffs (beans, maize flour, vegetable oil and rice) in November 2023 were around 51% higher than in 2022 and 101% higher than the five-year average.

Food insecurity forecast

The most recent IPC/CH analysis projects that between January and June 2024 the number of people in IPC/CH Phase 3 and 4 is expected to be 23.4 million, an 8% reduction compared to the June-December 2023 estimates. However, the situation is likely to be more worrisome than the IPC/CH projections, particularly due to the severe flooding that the DRC has been facing since the last quarter of 2023 and the resumption of conflict in North Kivu province. OCHA estimates that 431 472 households in 18 of the 26 provinces in the country will be affected by these floods. According to the December 2023 FEWS NET update, the security situation in North Kivu province has deteriorated during the last quarter of the year despite a brief lull in the fighting between the M23 and the DRC Armed Forces (FARDC). Hostilities have resumed in the territories of Masisi, Rutshuru and Nyiragongo, disrupting access to farmland and seasonal harvests.

Overview of DG ECHO and EU response

- DG ECHO has been a key actor in supporting the IASC "System Wide Scale-Up" declared on June 16, 2023, to intensify the humanitarian operations in response to the M23 crisis. That scale-up had a focus on food, protection (including gender-based violence), and disease outbreaks (cholera, Mpox, etc.). Three provinces were targeted by this response (Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu), which ran until December 2023.
- DG ECHO funded the humanitarian response in the DRC with EUR 100 million in 2023. This budget was used to finance multi-sectoral projects including food security and nutrition. Selection of proposals for 2024 is still ongoing, but humanitarian food assistance will be one of the most important areas funded considering the critical needs in the country.

Key recommendations and key policy/advocacy messages:

- Nexus opportunities targeting people both in IPC/CH Phase 3 and 4 should continue to be pursued, combining emergency assistance through food distributions and cash transfers for IPC/CH phase 4 populations with emergency agricultural and livelihoods recovery actions for IPC/CH phase 3 populations when feasible.
- To strengthen the analysis and the response integrating protection and gender mainstreaming approaches and referral pathways toward protection actors to respond to risk exposures linked to food insecurity.
- To develop social safety nets funded by non-humanitarian resources to build resilience and reduce the proportion of people in humanitarian need (as of today, the World Bank is supporting this type of approach mainly in urban settings).

3.1.3. Chad

Situation and evolution

Persistent violence in Chad and in bordering countries continues to cause displacements. The recent war in Sudan has resulted in an unprecedented number of Sudanese refugees in eastern Chad. From April to December 2023, more than 500 000 new refugees crossed the border from Sudan and are living in harsh conditions. Food assistance has been provided in the three eastern regions, but the response is largely underfunded and insufficient to cover emergency food needs.

Based on this exceptional influx, an extraordinary IPC/CH analysis was conducted at the end of July 2023, showing that over 2.1 million people were in IPC/CH Phase 3 and above.

This extraordinary crisis has led to a reorientation of most partners' activity from the Lake region to the east regions. Therefore, food assistance in the Lake region has been drastically reduced to nearly no assistance since May 2023, leaving thousands of acutely food insecure people without any kind of food assistance during the worst period of the year. This explains the significant increase of food-insecure people even during the post-harvest season from October to December 2023. More than 2 million people are currently affected by IPC/CH Phase 3 and above levels of acute food insecurity, which represents a 230% increase compared to the 5-year post-harvest season average in Chad.

In the Sahel area, dry spells have affected the western part of the belt, especially Bar-El-Gazal, Kanem and Lake provinces, leading to a significant decrease in cereal production and abnormal transhumance pathways. Food prices are also very high, e.g. 60% over the average for sorghum at the peak of the crisis.

The latest December 2022 national SMART survey shows a Global Acute Malnutrition

(GAM) prevalence of 8.6%, including 1.5% of Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM). GAM prevalence is above the WHO emergency threshold (15%) in the provinces of Wadi Fira (17.7%), Borkou (16.2%), and East Ennedi (15.7%). As for SAM, the provinces most affected are Bahr El Gazel (2.5%), Wadi Fira (2.5%), Sila (2.3%) and Salamat (2.2%). The nutritional situation has since then quite deteriorated with a dramatically low funding for the lean season response, the IDP response in the Lake and the Refugee crisis in the east. Therefore, partners have already raised the alarm on the increasing numbers of SAM admissions.

Food insecurity forecast

The Sudan crisis, the seasonal floodings, the exceptionally high prices and the lack of funding for food assistance are aggravating factors in an already structurally vulnerable country. This interplay of drivers could lead to an even more severe situation in the upcoming months. The latest Cadre Harmonisé analysis of November 2023 projects an even worsening situation with the number of people in IPC/CH Phase 3 and above expected to increase up to 2.9 million during the June to August 2024 lean season, implying approximately one million additional people requiring emergency food assistance compared to 2023. This constitutes an 87% increase compared to the 5-year average. This increase does not only concern the eastern regions affected by the Sudanese refugee crisis (83% increase) but also the Lake Chad province and the Sahel belt (Bar-El-Gazal and Kanem), where the number of people in IPC/CH Phase 3 and above will respectively increase by 56% and 43% compared to the 5-year average.

The nutrition situation is also of great concern with already a visible increase in the number of SAM admissions in many regions. Although there have not been any recent national SMART survey, especially since the arrival of the new Sudanese refugees, the latest partners' local SMART surveys in the Lake Chad province have showed alarming GAM and SAM rates, respectively -19,3%, 3%- in Liwa department, and 15,7%, 2,7% in Baga Sola department.

There is currently no sign of improvement of the situation in Chad and durable solutions are not on the horizon, neither for protracted IDPs or for the newly or protracted refugees.

Overview of DG ECHO and EU response

- DG ECHO is supporting emergency food security response to forcibly displaced people (50% of the Rapid Response Mechanism allocated to food), as well as lean season response. Support is also provided to the Food Security Cluster at national and Lac Province level.
- DG ECHO activated two additional top-ups in July and August 2023 to respond to the Sudan refugee crisis in the East and triggered several Crisis Modifiers on existing contracts, leading to an additional 5.5 million budget to the WFP response. A large part of this funding supported the food security response.

Key recommendations and policy/advocacy messages

- Urgently increase food assistance funding in Chad to support refugees, host communities and returnees in the East regions.
- Continue to support the emergency response in the Lake region to avoid a deterioration of the food security of IDPs and host communities.
- Support the Lean Season Response Plan of the Chadian government in areas with aggravating factors such as conflicts, floodings, or other natural disasters, in particular where the national response capacities are overwhelmed.
- Continue to improve prioritisation of assistance, ensuring greater coverage for the most vulnerable groups.
- Also, as part of the nexus approach, advocate for immediate support to crop production to ensure a better agricultural production level and a rapid recovery, in

complementarity with emergency food assistance.

3.1.4. Mali

Situation and evolution

The spread of insecurity in Mali's previously secure southern and western regions is negatively impacting agriculture, fisheries and livestock production and significantly reducing households' ability to access food due to increased transports costs.

Unusual population movements linked to insecurity continue in the regions of Mopti, Gao, Timbuktu and Menaka. According to the latest Displacement Tracking Matrix from IOM (February 2024), there are 354,739 IDPs in Mali.

Market analyses in 2023 indicate that food prices have increased significantly for millet (+55%), sorghum (+27%), maize (+43%), imported rice (+26%) and local rice (+28%), compared to five-year averages. These increases have further hampered access to food for the poorest households. In 2023, the seasonal decline in supply observed after the harvest period is less marked than in the 2021/2022 period, but greater than in an average year.

On 28 January, jointly with Burkina Faso and, Niger, Mali announced their withdrawal from ECOWAS, thus further increasing tensions in the region as well as economic insecurity. Before this, the CFA franc had already depreciated against the dollar and negatively affected the import capacities of market actors. This has increased the prices of imported staple foods while their availability in the markets has declined. While Mali is currently still a member of West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA), Mali's transitional president also mentioned his intention to change the national currency.

Food insecurity forecast

The latest IPC/CH analysis published in November 2023 showed that in the October-December period there were 715 410 people in IPC/CH Phase 3 and above, including 15,962 people in IPC/CH Phase 4. Food security will deteriorate in 2024, with the IPC/CH analysis projecting that the number of people suffering high levels of acute food insecurity in the June-August 2024 lean season period will almost double compared to the October-December 2023 period and increase to 1 369 619.

The nutritional situation remains worrying in the country due to, among others, poor food and hygiene practices, food deficits, heightened insecurity limiting access to basic social services, and the high prevalence of waterborne diseases. Access to safe drinking water is also limited in many parts of the country.

Overview of DG ECHO and EU response

- In 2023, DG ECHO allocated EUR 36 million to the humanitarian response in Mali. Allocations contributed to a rapid multi-sectoral response, including food assistance, shelter, wash and non-food items, health/nutrition, protection and education in emergencies. DG ECHO increasingly provides aid through cash and vouchers interventions. Mutualised logistics services and support to operations are also very important in DG ECHO operations in Mali.
- EUR 24.3 million are allocated under the 2024 HIP to support a multi-sectoral humanitarian response. Selection of proposals is still ongoing, but humanitarian food assistance through the rapid response mechanism and other modalities will be one of the most important areas funded considering the critical needs in the country.
- The EU Delegation allocated EUR 13 million to the '*REDDAM Résilience et développement durable sur la bande agropastorale du Mali (02/2022 – 01/2025)*'

programme as well as EUR 50 million to the ‘R2D: *Résilience et Développement Durable au Centre du Mali (07/2022 – 06/2027)*’ programme.

Key recommendations and policy/advocacy messages

- Additional financial support and scaling up of the response is required - particularly in the Ménaka region and the Ansongo circle (Gao region), which have been particularly affected by the security crisis.
- To continue to play a leading role in coordination and advocacy for the respect of IHL, principled aid delivery and increased assistance to Mali, and advocate with other services and donors for increased engagement in Mali.
- Opportunities for nexus are limited due to the political crisis and security environment, with the almost total suspension of development cooperation by the EU and its member states. However, engaging in resilience actions in food-insecure areas is essential.
- Against the backdrop of the withdrawal of the MINUSMA (United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali) procurement corridors and access to populations in need are jeopardised due to political decisions and the ongoing conflict. This requires efforts to maintain principled humanitarian access, particularly in the regions of Mopti, Timbuktu, Gao, Kidal, Taoudénni and Ménaka.
- In addition to the provision of food assistance, there is the need to maintain and strengthen actions to prevent and manage malnutrition and to support livelihood recovery for the displaced, refugee and returnee populations.

3.1.5. Niger

Situation and evolution

Since the *coup d'état* of 26 July 2023 marking the accession of the National Council for the Safeguarding of the Fatherland (CNSP) to power, Niger has been under ECOWAS trade and financial sanctions, which includes an importation ban. The socio-political environment has not ceased to worsen.

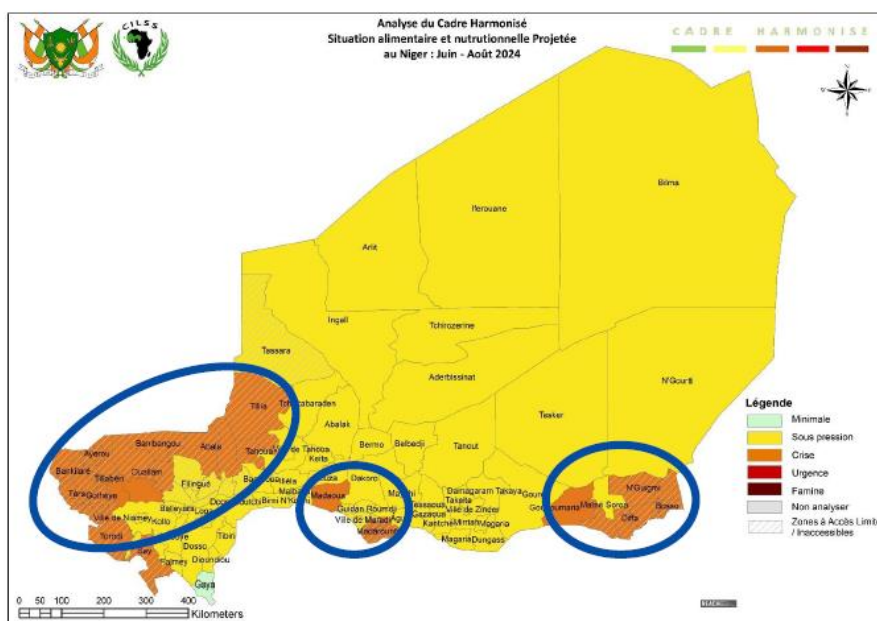
On 28th January 2024, Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali jointly announced their withdrawal from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The consequences on economics, politics and freedom of movement have not been clearly evaluated yet. While all three countries are currently still members of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) their respective transitional presidents also mentioned their intention to change the national currency.

The 2023 production of the main cereals is estimated at over 5 million tonnes – 13% down compared to 2022 and 2% down compared to the five-year average.

Food insecurity forecast

According to the IPC/CH analysis conducted in November 2023, over 2.3 million people were in need of assistance between October and December 2023. Looking ahead, over 3,2 million people (12% of the total population) were projected to be in severe food insecurity (IPC/CH phase 3 and above) during the 2024 lean season (compared to around 2,9 million in the 2023 lean season), including around 95 000 people in IPC/CH phase 4.

Food insecurity is concentrated in the regions of Tillabéry and Tahoua as well as in those of Diffa and Maradi, where the persistence of terrorist attacks hamper livelihood activities and the distribution of food assistance.



Source: Cadre Harmonisé

Overview of DG ECHO and EU response

- EUR 33 million were provided under the 2023 HIP, including EUR 8 million from the SEAR, to support a multi-sectoral humanitarian response, notably through rapid response mechanisms. Food assistance, rapid multi-sectoral response to IDPs, and health were the most important sectors. DG ECHO provided aid mainly through cash and in-kind deliveries.
- EUR 23.8 million are allocated under the 2024 HIP to support a multi-sectoral humanitarian response and the selection of proposals is still ongoing. Food assistance will be one of the most important sectors financed, given the critical needs.
- As regards development cooperation, the EU provided EUR 25 million in 2022 in budget support to address food insecurity, nutrition security and sustainable agriculture, complementing the global allocation of EUR 195 million. However, following the military takeover, this allocation has been suspended. Regarding on-going programmes in this area, the EU is still assessing the possibility to pursue them, depending on how the situation evolves.

Key recommendations and policy/advocacy messages

- The combined effects of the sanctions imposed by ECOWAS and the difficulties encountered to implement subsidies on food sales and government-sponsored general food distributions could deteriorate the food security of vulnerable populations. Border closures due to the sanctions are already having operational impacts on humanitarian assistance as food trucks *en route* to Niger and Burkina Faso have been delayed in Togo and Benin. The authorities of Benin have now authorised humanitarian cargo to cross the border from Benin to Niger, but *de facto* authorities in Niger are not allowing the entry of cargo from Benin until further notice. Humanitarian advocacy efforts, to which DG ECHO contributed, are expected to lead to the reopening of the borders for humanitarian assistance, but the situation should be monitored closely.
- According to OCHA, Niger's humanitarian response plan is funded at 37% only. The remaining 63% is needed to cover the needs expressed at the beginning of 2023. Such needs are set to increase as the socio-economic situation deteriorates.

3.1.6. Nigeria

Situation and evolution

The humanitarian crisis in Northeast Nigeria continues, with civilians bearing the brunt of a conflict that has resulted in widespread displacement, destruction of infrastructure, and a near-collapse of basic social services. As of January 2024, 2.08 million people are internally displaced in the most affected northeast states of Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe (BAY), of which over 80% are in Borno State, with women and children comprising most of those internally displaced according to IOM.

The main macroeconomic indicators continued to deteriorate due to poor national revenue generation, increasing headline inflation, decreasing value of the Nigerian Naira (NGN), and diminishing national reserves. This, coupled with the low foreign reserves, continues to drive high annual headline inflation, which reached 27.33% in October 2023.

Cereal production – particularly maize, millet, and sorghum – is estimated to be lower than last year and the five-year average, following prolonged dry spells in July and August 2023 in the surplus-producing regions of the north. According to the National Agricultural Extension and Research Liaison Services (NAERLS) 2023 Wet Season Agricultural Performance report, national maize, millet, and sorghum production ranges from 6% to 25% lower than last year. In addition to the dry spells, the high cost of agricultural inputs, ongoing conflict, and localized flooding have negatively impacted the 2023/2024 main season crop production. While harvesting activities are providing a seasonal increase in labour opportunities and some seasonal decreases in staple prices, as expected, the positive impacts of the cereal harvest are limited due to the below-average production.

There are 18.5 million in IPC/CH Phase 3 and above according to the November 2023 IPC/CH analysis during the post-harvest season, which represents 9% of the population analysed.

Food needs remain very high, especially in the Northeast (BAY States) and the North-West, where acute food needs have significantly increased over the years, along with acute malnutrition. The Humanitarian Situation Monitoring of September 2023 in the inaccessible areas of the BAY states shows concerning food consumption deficits and limited diversity of diets. Approximately 51% of the households struggle to have sufficient food intake, and nearly 69% experience a crisis or higher levels of food insecurity (IPC/CH Phase 3 and above), further evidenced in the pervasive use of food-based coping strategies. Approximately 41% of the households rely on crisis coping strategies to meet their food needs. IDPs and returnees show significantly higher levels of deprivation and vulnerability in terms of food consumption, coping, nonmonetary poverty, and food stock levels, especially IDPs residing in host communities.

It is estimated that nearly 4.4 million children under 5 years are suffering from acute malnutrition in the period of May 2023 – April 2024 in northwest and northeast Nigeria. This includes 1.04 million cases of Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) and 3.37 million cases of Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM).

In the North-West and North-Center, banditry, kidnapping, and farmer/herder attacks continue to displace households and disrupt livelihoods. Attacks were reported in October and November in Benue, Kaduna, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, and Zamfara states. The insecurity has disrupted the ongoing harvest in the worst-affected areas, limiting income generation and access to food. This, in conjunction with the decline in cross-border trade with the Niger Republic, is also disrupting market functionality. IDPs in major urban areas in the northwest are living in makeshift shelters and heavily reliant on limited community-based food assistance, domestic labour, and negative coping strategies, such as begging and prostitution, to access food. IDPs have limited household assets and no access to land for cultivation and are likely facing wide food consumption gaps. Despite the harvest, households in the northwest and North-Center will likely experience food consumption gaps and IPC/CH Phase 3 outcomes through May 2024. A subset of very poor households in the most conflict-affected areas were unable to cultivate and are relying heavily on bartering, foraging, and begging to

access food and are likely facing IPC/CH Phase 4 conditions.

Food Insecurity forecast

Insecurity linked to the ongoing conflict between non-state armed groups (NSAG) and government security forces, banditry, and intercommunal clashes remain the key drivers of food insecurity. Farmers struggle to access and cultivate their lands, while herders cannot move their livestock freely. Many local government areas remain completely or partially inaccessible for humanitarian assistance, and in 2023 it was estimated that one million people in Borno State were in areas inaccessible to international humanitarian actors.

Climate change also reduces the resilience of communities and fuels intercommunity violence on the use of natural resources. Food consumption is expected to worsen over the coming months. The elevated consumption gaps, malnutrition, and mortality are largely driven by the limited availability of food stocks, restricted access to functional markets and poor water, health, and sanitation services, which might heighten morbidity risk, and impact more negatively on households' ability to engage in labour for food or resource gathering. An additional factor is the unsustainable use of emergency coping strategies.

Based on all these elements, the number of people affected by acute food insecurity IPC/CH Phase 3 and above, is expected to increase up to 26,5 million people during the 2024 lean season from June to September 2024, including one million people in IPC/CH Phase 4 Emergency in North-East, North-West and North-Center states. This represents a 6,4% increase of people in IPC/CH Phase 3 and above compared to 2023 for all Nigeria, but a very significant increase of 26% in the North-West States. It is the first time that more people will be affected by acute food insecurity in the North-West states than in the North-East States.

Overview of DG ECHO and EU response

- EUR 31.5 million are allocated under the 2024 HIP to support a multi-sectoral humanitarian response. Selection of proposals is still ongoing, but considering the critical food security needs in the country the food assistance will remain one of the priority sectors.
- EU/DG ECHO is a leading voice in humanitarian advocacy on the Northeast.

Key recommendations and policy/advocacy messages

- Improve prioritisation of assistance and vulnerability assessment, ensuring greater coverage for the most vulnerable groups, especially in a context of funding decrease.
- Assist forcibly displaced people from the Maiduguri Metropolitan Council (MMC) and Jere camp closure when they present themselves to a formal camp.
- Leverage funding to assist all vulnerable IDPs in the garrison towns' camps who do not have access to long-term sustainable livelihood opportunities.
- Where feasible and safe, immediately support agriculture in the crop season to ensure better agricultural production in a "do no harm" and principled manner.

3.2. East and Southern Africa

3.2.1. Ethiopia

Current situation and evolution since the last report

Ethiopia is, once again, on the verge of another major humanitarian crisis due to

cycles of multiple, often overlapping crises, which severely weaken communities' ability to cope. These crises are primarily driven by the convergence of four major factors: armed conflicts, climate crises, diseases, and economic shocks. The coming together of these shocks is pushing more people into displacement, food insecurity, malnutrition, disease outbreaks, and increased protection concerns.

Despite the end of the Tigray conflict in late 2022, the northern regions are still reeling from its impact; unsettled territorial disputes have left around one million IDPs in makeshift camps. In Tigray, Northern and Eastern Amhara and Eastern Afar regions, widespread destruction of assets, a major lack of livelihood opportunities and services, and reliance on severe coping mechanisms have resulted in the collapse of livelihood capacities.

After a prolonged drought in southern and southeastern Ethiopia caused by several consecutive failed rainy seasons, the effects of El Niño have caused further devastation as most of these regions were hit by widespread flooding, affecting 1.5 million people and pushing hundreds of thousands into displacement. At the same time, an alarming and worsening drought started to grip Afar, Amhara, Tigray, Oromia, South and Southwest regions. Consequently, pastures, crop production and livestock have been lost or depleted, severely affecting the food security and nutrition situation, in particular in areas affected by the northern conflict.

On top of the various drivers of humanitarian needs, in the first quarter of 2023, allegations of widespread in-kind food aid fraud led to the suspension of in-kind food assistance funded by USAID between June and December. Food aid was resumed for refugees and IDPs in November and December 2023, respectively.

As a result of these compounded causes, the projected number of people in need in 2024 reaches 21 million (Global Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024), including 15.8 million people affected by high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC/CH Phase 3 and above). This is less than the 28.6 million people in need reported in 2023. However, this analysis is not fully accurate as no IPC/CH analysis has been conducted in the country since September 2021.

The situation is particularly concerning in drought-affected areas where malnutrition rates have increased alarmingly in the last months. SMART surveys conducted in late 2023 show a very high prevalence of Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) in three zones of the Somali and Tigray regions, and high GAM rates in another four, including Afar and Oromia, in addition to Tigray. Particularly worrisome is the situation of IDPs in Tigray with a 26.5% GAM rate. The risk of mortality remains high, with an increase in the number of deaths occurring during the second half of 2023 in Afar, Amhara, Oromia and Somali regions.

Food security forecast

The situation is expected to deteriorate further in the next months as current harvest losses prevent households from covering their needs ahead of the lean season, which is set to start earlier than usual. Although current assessments have not confirmed a famine-like situation, food security and malnutrition will become critical if multisectoral responses are not delivered at scale.

This is occurring against a backdrop of reduced donor funding in 2024, with a 50% cut expected in humanitarian funds compared to 2023, mostly due to a major reduction in USAID's food aid budget.

Another challenge concerns the limited information available on the needs and gaps to cover, as the humanitarian community has been struggling to share a basic minimum set of humanitarian needs analysis, indicators, and gaps.

Overview of DG ECHO and EU response

- In 2023, the EU allocated EUR 84.8 million in humanitarian funding for live-saving assistance in Ethiopia., out of which about 30 million (36%) were allocated to food assistance, cash and nutrition.

- Under its 2024 initial funding allocation, the EU has planned to allocate EUR 38 million to humanitarian partners, of which about 45% (EUR 17 million) is set to cover food assistance, cash and nutrition.
- The EU adopted three Individual Measures in 2023 for a total of EUR 329 million to support development in Ethiopia. Individual Measures 2 and 3 include actions aimed at improving the food security situation in the country with particular attention to areas affected by conflict and climate-related events.

Key recommendations and policy/advocacy messages

- To urgently scale up multisectoral responses including food, nutrition, health, and wash. Cash-based interventions must be prioritised.
- To ensure targeting and duration in emergency responses is adequate.
- There is a need to strengthen food security information systems and related analysis to better tailor the humanitarian response according to priorities and help mobilise funds.
- Further support is needed from development actors to enhance recovery and build the resilience of affected communities.

3.2.2. South Sudan

Current situation and evolution since the last report

South Sudan is facing multiple interlinked shocks dominated by intercommunal violence, unprecedented adverse effects of climate change (flooding and drought), economic crisis and a large influx of returnees and refugees from the Sudan conflict, which is further affecting the food security of about two thirds of the population.

An estimated 7.1 million people of the total population of 12.4 million will face acute food insecurity at IPC/CH phase 3 or above during the peak of the lean season from April to July 2024, necessitating humanitarian food assistance (HNO 2024). Furthermore, according to the latest IPC/CH analysis (Dec 2023), around 80 000 people in Greater Pibor Administrative Area and Aweil East in Northern Bahr el Ghazal State, are expected to experience catastrophic food insecurity (IPC/CH Phase 5). An estimated 1.6 million children are at risk of acute malnutrition. Due to the funding gap, the main food assistance actor (WFP) prioritises the 3.5 million persons considered most at risk.

Since its onset, the conflict in Sudan has had direct repercussions in South Sudan. As of 21 January 2024, over 0.5 million people have crossed into South Sudan, adding an extra layer of acutely food insecure population. The food security outcomes will likely deteriorate for returnees and host communities as they face significant food consumption gaps, and resort to negative coping mechanisms.

Trade flows from Sudan remain significantly disrupted due to the conflict, with no cereal imports reported from Sudan in November 2024 through the main border crossing points, contributing to a rise in the food basket cost. While cross border trade with Uganda continues, November import volumes for maize and sorghum (main staple food) were respectively 62% and 76% lower than at the same time last year³.

South Sudan, like other countries in the Greater Horn of Africa, has experienced prolonged rains, which provided average to very good growth conditions for late-maturing sorghum and maize crops in the bimodal zones. However, high soil saturation has negatively affected the harvest of some crops, such as beans and ground nuts, and interfered with drying of the main season crops, thus likely to increase post-harvest losses. FEWS NET projects that the 2024 harvest is likely to be

³ FEWS NET, Dec 2023.

below that of 2023.

Availability of pasture and livestock products have increased in most pastoral and agro-pastoral livelihood areas due to the improvement in rainfall in 2023. In Aweil North of Northern Bahr el Ghazal and parts of northern Upper Nile, communities are reporting a rising presence of Sudanese nomads earlier-than-normal. This is likely to cause significant pressure on resources and drive conflict over resource use soon.

Protracted displacement continues for more than 2.23 million people, many of whom are unable to return to their areas of origin and are hence faced with a dire limitation of livelihood opportunities. Despite continued inflows of hard currency from crude oil export and non-oil revenue, continued currency depreciation and price inflation further reduce the purchasing power of poor households and their access to food.

Food insecurity forecast

Food security and malnutrition conditions are expected to deteriorate further from February through May 2024, which covers both the post-harvest and the start of the lean season in the country. Food access and availability is likely to decrease, driven by the depletion of own-produced food stocks, seasonal declines in the availability of wild foods, fish, and livestock products, limited income-earning opportunities, and high rising staple food prices amid the persistence of macroeconomic challenges.

In addition, the Sudan crisis continues to create an inflow of returnees, overburdening the host populations. The December 2024 elections are expected to cause an increase in conflict at a national level and put further pressure on civilians. Heavy rains and flash floods will likely exacerbate the flood situation along the Blue Nile, whose water levels are already high.

Overview of DG ECHO and EU response

- DG ECHO 2024 HIP has a budget of EUR 37 million, of which about 25% will be allocated to food assistance and basic needs. Due to the magnitude of needs compared to resources available, DG ECHO finances emergency food assistance in areas classified as IPC/CH phases 4 and 5. The Rapid Response Mechanism implemented by a consortium of International NGOs has been used to address the urgent needs related to the population movement across the border with Sudan.

Key recommendations and policy/advocacy messages

- This food crisis continues to be severely underfunded. According to OCHA, the 2024 HRP requires USD 1.8 billion to respond to the humanitarian crisis in South Sudan. Timely and at-scale funding is urgently needed to address the already dire situation for 9 million people, of which 80% are in dire need of food assistance.
- To increase the efficiency of the humanitarian aid systems where a large amount of the budget is spent on the logistics related to delivery or in-kind supplies for both food and non-food items, there is need to:
 - Enhance the coordination and collaboration efforts in advancing the cash modality, which has proven to be more effective and cost-efficient.
 - Explore nexus opportunities with development actors wherever feasible and reinforce coordination with development donors to scale-up long-term investments on agriculture, basic services, and infrastructures.
 - Reinforce collective diplomatic advocacy towards the Government of South Sudan to enforce law and reduce violence that hinders humanitarian access but also populations' access to livelihoods.

3.2.3. Sudan

Current situation and evolution since the last report.

The IPC/CH analysis update of Sudan of December 2023 reveals that intense conflict and organized violence, coupled with limited access and the continued economic decline, drove approximately 17.7 million Sudanese (37% of the population) into IPC/CH Phase 3 or above between October 2023 and February 2024. This is the highest level of acute food insecurity on record for the same period after harvest in Sudan. Of these, close to 5 million have been classified in IPC/CH Phase 4.

A FEWS NET projection of February 2024 expects some households to deteriorate to IPC/CH Phase 5 in Omdurman (Khartoum) and El Geneina (West Darfur) in the upcoming lean season.

Sudan is among the four countries worldwide with the highest prevalence of malnutrition estimated at 13.6%. In 2024, the nutrition outlook is expected to further deteriorate due to decline in access to food and compromised health, WASH and nutrition services. According to UNICEF, over 700 000 children are likely to suffer from the deadliest form of malnutrition in 2024.

Conflict-driven displacement (currently 13% of Sudan's population are IDPs) triggers a deterioration in living standards and a loss of assets, including homes and land, combined with increased levels of unemployment, underemployment, or informal work, and high levels of acute food insecurity. The expansion of the conflict to crop-producing regions can further disrupt the ongoing main harvest season, and a lower production of winter wheat is expected.

In addition, insecurity, looting, communication blackouts and bureaucratic impediments limit the presence of technical and humanitarian staff on the ground, affecting the delivery of humanitarian assistance across the country, in particular in Darfur and Kordofan states. Despite the massive needs, food assistance actors reached only 3.76 million people, or 18% of the total population in need.

Prices skyrocket due to disruptions of trade flows, high production costs, and disruptions of market functionality. The Sudanese Pound (SDG) is devaluating quickly in relation to the US Dollar (USD): the January 2024 exchange rate was 88% higher than in March 2023, before the start of the conflict. All this, coupled with the heavy burden of hosting the internally displaced persons, is causing the purchasing power and coping capacity of populations to deteriorate.

Food insecurity forecast

An atypically early start of the lean season is expected in most areas, driven by conflict-related reductions in food availability, disruptions to trade flows and prices, decreasing income-earning opportunities, as well as expected increases in displacement in many areas.

The spread of conflict to the Southeast is disrupting trade and agricultural activities in a region known as Sudan's breadbasket. This will threaten national food availability and increase the likelihood of food shortages after the lean season begins⁴.

Widespread Crisis (IPC/CH Phase 3) outcomes are expected across most of the country, with Emergency (IPC/CH Phase 4) outcomes persisting through May 2024 in the most heavily conflict-affected areas in Khartoum, Greater Darfur, and Greater Kordofan; parts of Al Jazirah, Blue Nile, and White Nile, and areas of Kassala and Red Sea affected by poor production amid poor purchasing power and very high prices; as well as among the displaced. Some experts indicate that the food insecurity could significantly get worse, possibly reaching IPC/CH Phase 5 (catastrophe/famine) in the most exposed hotspot areas of Kordofan and Darfur, including IDPs sites, if the

⁴ FEWS NET, Feb 2024.

situation is not contained with appropriate measures.

Overview of DG ECHO and EU response

- In total, DG ECHO made available EUR 128 million for Sudan in 2023, including an additional EUR 52 million since the outbreak of hostilities, of which about EUR 39 million (31%) is to respond to food security needs.
- In 2024, the EU's initial allocation for the humanitarian response in Sudan alone is EUR 72 million, which includes a response to the food security and malnutrition crisis.
- DG ECHO remains active in all strategic, technical, and operational discussions linked to the Sudan context and contributes to food security and cash working group discussions.
- The EU also announced EUR 90 million of development funding to enhance food security and resilience of rural communities in Sudan as part of individual measures in favour of the Republic of the Sudan. Programmes are still under negotiation and contracting, but should mostly focus on existing local (short) value chains including livestock, staple crops, fruit and protein plants, whose sustainability (environmental, social, and economic) will be improved in view of increasing resilience and enhancing profitability for smallholder producers. The EU signed a contract of about EUR 7.9 million covering needs in East Darfur and South Kordofan.

Key recommendations and policy/advocacy messages

- The increasing food insecurity requires a decisive and urgent no-regrets response to prevent the risk of IPC/CH 5 in specific hotspot areas already in IPC/CH 4. The safe passage of humanitarian aid and commercial flows, as well as authorisation for humanitarians to cross conflict lines, are critical to prevent deepening hunger during the 2024 lean season.
- Prioritise the provision of lifesaving assistance, giving precedence to Darfur, Kordofan, and Khartoum states, which are already hosting substantial populations in IPC/CH Phase 4, at risk of reaching IPC/CH Phase 5. Measures should include selecting response modalities that enhance cost-effectiveness and efficiency, as well as anticipating and mitigating risk exposures, considering the constrained humanitarian access and the exposure to risks of looting (particularly for in-kind supplies).
- Advocate with relevant stakeholders to urgently engage in quantitative food security, nutrition and health analysis, including timely updates of databases for monitoring and decision making. Further assessments and close monitoring of the evolution of food insecurity is highly needed.
- Urgently advocate for the mobilisation of additional funding to address food insecurity and support long-term solutions where feasible.

3.3. Middle East and North Africa (MENA)

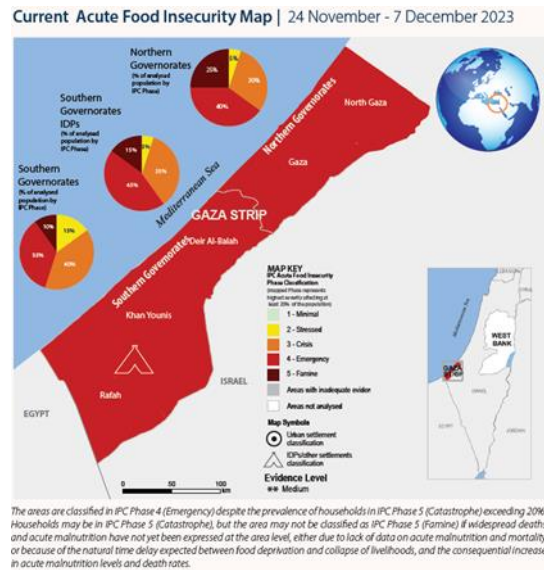
3.3.1. Occupied Palestinian Territories

Current situation and evolution since the last report

Extensive bombardments, ground operations and besiegement have caused catastrophic levels of acute food insecurity across the Gaza Strip. Around 85% of the population (1.7 million people) is displaced, with many people having relocated multiple times in increasingly smaller geographic areas.

An IPC/CH analysis conducted in December highlighted that over 90% of the population in the Gaza Strip (about 2.08 million people) were classified in IPC/CH Phase 3 or above. This included over 40% of the population (over 900 000 people) in Emergency (IPC/CH Phase 4), and over 15% (around 380 000 people) was in Catastrophe (IPC/CH Phase 5).

A recent report by a DG ECHO partner documents the destruction of fishing boats and ports, agricultural land including olive and citrus plantations, and greenhouses creating long-term consequences on the local food production capacity.



Source: IPC/CH

The imposition of a blockade on Gaza has affected the markets and food processing facilities. The latest WFP Gaza market monitoring report (Dec 2023) notes that markets face a substantial shortage of essential food items, with 66% of the shops reporting depletion of crucial goods, especially in the North of Gaza.

With shops largely depleted, the informal markets become a key source of basic goods. Some individuals have resorted to taking goods straight from warehouses, trucks, or distribution sites out of despair.

On 27 February 2024, the UN Security Council discussed food security risks in Gaza, following the issuance of an OCHA white note on the matter. Briefers from OCHA, WFP and FAO painted a dire picture of the food crisis in Gaza.

Food insecurity forecast

The IPC/CH assessment done in December 2023 has provided evidence that the food security situation in Gaza has degraded to unprecedented levels at an unprecedented speed. Virtually the entire population is above IPC/CH Phase 3, and 15% are in IPC/CH Phase 5. Dec. This assessment projected one-quarter of the population in IPC/CH 5 around the end of Q1 2024.

This is the highest share of people facing high levels of acute food insecurity that the IPC/CH initiative has ever classified for any given area or country.

Despite partners' efforts, food access, particularly in northern Gaza, falls far below needs. Unless food security partners' operational space and delivery access are granted, the food insecurity situation can only further deteriorate. Another IPC/CH exercise is scheduled for the first quarter of 2024 to assess the food security situation.

Continued hostilities, disruptions in healthcare services, lack of access to food and clean water, and poor sanitation conditions remain major challenges and contribute to the risk of famine in Gaza.

Overview of DG ECHO and EU response

In 2023, DG ECHO almost quadrupled its humanitarian assistance to respond to the emergency, bringing its total budget to more than EUR 102 million. The Commission announced an initial allocation of EUR 125 million in humanitarian aid to the Palestinian people in 2024.

With EUR 21 million support of DG ECHO, WFP procured over 7 000 tons of ready-to-eat (RTE) food parcels, wheat flour, and high-energy biscuits (HEB), of which over 3 300 metric tons have already been distributed. The remainder was expected to enter Gaza in January/February 2024, depending on the queues at border crossings.

The Gaza Protection Consortium's procurement of food baskets was due to arrive in Gaza in February 2024. Mercy Corps will provide a kit comprising the food basket and complementary Non-food items (hygiene kits, and winterization/household kits) for over 2 000 households.

Key recommendations and policy/advocacy messages

- It is imperative to ensure the respect of IHL in the territories under attack. This includes effective mechanisms to prevent hostilities from affecting civilians and humanitarian operations; safeguarding the protection of civilians and the protection of humanitarian workers, as well as their means of work, and scaling up the evacuation of the sick and wounded.
- Safe, unconditional, and unimpeded humanitarian access is a key priority. All parties must work towards establishing more humanitarian corridors and pauses, of sufficient duration, and to scale up the entry of humanitarian and commercial goods through all possible entry points and pipelines for access to basic needs across all parts of the Gaza Strip.
- Sufficient food must be allowed to enter the Gaza Strip each month to meet the recommended minimum nutritional requirements of 2 100 calories per person per day, with 10-12% of the total energy provided by protein and 17% by fat.
- Fuel must enter Gaza to enable the proper functioning of hospitals, water extraction and purification, food preparation and operation of the communication networks.
- Water supplies must be provided for Gaza's population in line with the minimum humanitarian emergency response standards of 15 litres per person per day. This includes restoring the uninterrupted Mekorot water supply lines from Israel into Gaza.
- Humanitarian aid alone cannot meet all the needs. Increasing commercial imports into Gaza is a matter of priority to start restoring marketing functionality.
- Livelihoods, food production, cargo movement, and distribution assets must be protected.

3.3.2. Syria

Current situation and evolution since the last report

The multifaceted crisis in Syria continues to drive humanitarian needs and to increase the vulnerabilities of millions of people. In 2024, 16.7 million people will need

humanitarian assistance across Syria, an increase of 1.4 million from 2023 and the largest number since the beginning of the crisis in 2011. According to the Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024 (HNO), of the 16.7 million people in need, nearly 33% are displaced.

The situation in Syria continues to be characterised by an active conflict and ongoing military operations, which intensified in the last quarter of 2023. In October 2023, northern Syria and Deir-ez-Zor Governorate in particular, witnessed the most significant escalation of hostilities since 2019, resulting in the displacement of over 120 000 people in Northwest Syria.

According to the HNO 2024, 12.9 million people are food insecure in Syria, of which, according to WFP's December situation report, 3.1 million are severely food insecure. In comparison, the number of people in severe conditions increased by 17% since 2022. Moreover, the HNO reports that an estimated 15.4 million people (65% of the population) are in need of food and livelihood support.

The cost of living in Syria continued to surge, as demonstrated by the increasing cost of the minimum expenditure basket. The cost of living nearly doubled in the first ten months of 2023 and quadrupled over a two-year period, while wages remained stagnant. In December 2023 the food basket cost was five times more than the monthly minimum wage, pegged at 185 940 Syrian pounds (SYP) since August 2023. A family earning a minimum wage today can only afford one tenth of its monthly essential needs.

While the food needs in Syria have been steadily increasing, funding for the Food Security Sector (FSS) has been fluctuating over the past years. The Food Security and Agriculture sector was funded at only 39.1% under the 2023 Syrian Arab Republic Humanitarian Response Plan.

Due to funding shortfalls, WFP ended the general food assistance programme in December 2023 and will replace it with a targeted alternative set of emergency food assistance interventions that focus on the most severely vulnerable households. WFP Syria requires USD 471 million for the next six months (January 2024 – June 2024) to ensure assistance to the most vulnerable people in Syria across all its activities.

Food insecurity forecast

In Northwest Syria price increases, insufficient reserves, and the inability of the de-facto authorities to set up and implement a fully-fledged food security policy will continue to have adverse effects.

Furthermore, expected drastic budget cuts from large donors for 2024 could reduce capacity to reach all people in need. This, mixed with a continuous deteriorating economic situation, increased conflict in Northwest Syria and mixed risks of outbreaks of communicable disease predicts a negative outlook for the Syrians in 2024. Additionally, the regional conflict is likely to pose challenges to the food supply chain, further contributing to inflationary pressure.

The driving factors of food insecurity are likely to remain in place in 2024 and, according to the Food Security Cluster, if the required support is not provided, there is a high probability that vulnerable people will fall into extreme poverty and that the number of people in need will increase further during the year.

Overview of DG ECHO and EU response

- In 2024, DG ECHO's allocation under its Humanitarian Implementation Plan (HIP) amounts to EUR 148.29 million. DG ECHO will continue to support a multi-sectorial humanitarian response. Considering the critical needs in Syria, food security will remain one of the prioritised sectors of intervention.
- DG ECHO continues to advocate the Government of Syria and the Central Bank

of Syria to introduce an adjustable preferential rate for NGOs and UN agencies to compensate for the depreciation of the Syrian pound and hyperinflation.

Key recommendations and policy/advocacy messages

- Prioritise funding for immediate lifesaving response to vulnerable Syrians, with a focus on food and nutrition assistance, as well as early recovery interventions.
- Advocate with other EU services and donors for increased engagement on Syria for integrated programming that boosts the ability of people to earn a living: livelihoods programmes, including agricultural projects, market strengthening, job creation and restoration of basic services.
- Develop strategies to operate in a context of high inflation and currency depreciation supporting hybrid modalities balancing cash and in-kind assistance.
- Strengthen humanitarian cash and shock-responsive mechanisms.

3.3.3. Yemen

Current situation and evolution from last report

Yemen remains one of the most food insecure countries in the world. According to the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) 2024, 17.6 million people (more than half of the population) are likely to face high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 and above) in 2024. Approximately 5.0 million children under five and 2.7 million pregnant and lactating women (PLW) are in need of life-saving humanitarian integrated nutrition interventions in 2024.

A partial IPC/CH analysis was released in February 2024 covering areas controlled by the Internationally Recognised Government (IRG) between October 2023 and February 2024. The analysis shows a worsening of the situation compared to the previous projection analysis for June-December 2023, with a 12% increase of populations in IPC/CH Phase 3 and above, increasing the proportion of people affected by high levels of acute food insecurity from 41 % to 45 % within the population analysed. Of primary concern are the 1.3 million people classified in IPC/CH Phase 4 (Emergency). The IPC/CH analysis in areas controlled by the De Facto Authorities (DFA) is currently ongoing and will be reported in the next edition of this report.

The current high levels of food insecurity are driven by nine years of protracted armed conflict and economic collapse, aggravated in 2023 by the ripple effects of the war in Ukraine, climate-induced weather events (Yemen ranked third globally on the INFORM Climate Change Risk Index for 2022) and significant funding shortages, with the 2023 Humanitarian Response Plan only funded at 39.5%, representing the lowest coverage since 2017. The Food Security and Agriculture Cluster only received 35.5% of the requested funds (54.2% in 2022), leaving a funding gap of USD 1.4 billion.

Two main events particularly had an impact on the food security crisis in Yemen during the reporting period: the temporary pause of General Food Distributions (GFA) in DFA-controlled areas and the military escalation in the Red Sea. In December 2023, the WFP paused GFA in DFA-controlled areas, affecting around 9.5 million beneficiaries. The pause is the consequence of a severe funding crisis, which had already led the organisation to make cuts to food rations, and of unsuccessful negotiations between DFA and WFP to reach an agreement on the retargeting approach to assist those most in need. Since then, negotiations have continued and a technical agreement was reached in December 2023 to resume GFA and start the retargeting exercise. However, there is no clear implementation timeline yet. Meanwhile, the 3.6 million beneficiaries in IRG-controlled areas continue receiving assistance equivalent to approximately a quarter of their minimum daily energy requirements.

In parallel, the military escalation in the Red Sea has caused severe disruptions to global trade, with spikes in costs of basic food commodities and fuel. Considering that

Yemen imports up to 85% of its food requirements, further escalation of the conflict in the Red Sea could lead to reduced imports, putting an additional strain on food insecure households across the country.

Food insecurity forecast

17.6 million people are expected to face high levels of acute food insecurity throughout 2024. Yemen will remain among the worse food security crises in the world. This figure is likely to be an underestimate because data collection and analysis for DFA-controlled areas is still ongoing and does not yet factor in the impact of the pause in WFP's GFA and the military escalation in the Red Sea over the past months.

While the outlook for 2024 will be clearer once the results of the IPC/CH exercise are finalised for the entire country, according to FEWS NET, acute food insecurity in seven governorates in the DFA controlled areas is projected to gradually decline to emergency levels, IPC/CH Phase 4, or worse during the February-to-May period. Stocks from the late 2023 main cereal harvest and zakat from better-off households during Ramadan and Eid (March/April 2024) will provide some temporary seasonal support but the numbers of households facing IPC/CH Phase 3 and above are anticipated to start increasing between February and May 2024. In addition, the ongoing military escalation in the Red Sea and its mid-to-long term implications have the potential to further deteriorate the food security situation in Yemen. This will be compounded by the stalled peace talks, which will have immediate and medium-term economic consequences – namely a further delay in both hydrocarbon exports and public sector salary payments.

Overview of DG ECHO and EU response

- DG ECHO allocated EUR 145.12 million to Yemen in 2023, compared to EUR 170million in 2022. In 2023 approximately 80% of the budget contributed directly and indirectly to food security outcomes. DG ECHO provides food assistance mainly through cash and in-kind deliveries. In 2024, DG ECHO will allocate an initial budget of EUR 90 million to Yemen, with a renewed commitment to address food insecurity.
- Beyond DG ECHO's response, it is important to flag an important reduction in funding from BHA/USAID to the food security sector, as only USD 170 million are earmarked for 2024 compared the USD 400 million allocated in 2023.

Key recommendations and policy/advocacy messages

- Considering the expected deterioration of the food security situation over the coming months, an increase in funding for the Yemen response and a de-escalation of the Red Sea crisis is essential. The small gains made over the last years (e.g. slight decrease in child mortality) could otherwise easily be reversed.
- To ensure greater coverage of the most vulnerable communities with multi-sectorial interventions, the humanitarian response needs to be more prioritised and targeted. In complement to humanitarian aid, development actors should support livelihoods, basic services and economic conditions for long-term solutions.
- The most significant risks expected to affect already vulnerable communities this year are renewed conflict, disease outbreaks, extreme climate events and economic instability. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the humanitarian cash and shock-responsive social protection (SRSP) nexus, livelihood support and diversification, inter-sectoral programming, monitoring and early warning systems.
- Humanitarian and development actors should develop specific strategies to operate in contexts of high inflation and depreciation such as Yemen (e.g. through flexible programming, market monitoring and contingency planning).
- Aid actors should strengthen response coordination and humanitarian advocacy

efforts to increase their joint ability to prepare for additional shocks, to access those most in need and to promote compliance with International Humanitarian Law (IHL).

3.4. Asia and Pacific

3.4.1. Afghanistan

Current situation and evolution since the last report

The latest Hunger Hotspot report spanning from November 2023 to April 2024 includes Afghanistan as a food insecurity hotspot of very high concern, removing Afghanistan from the list of countries of highest concern. This is in line with the latest IPC/CH analysis released in December 2023, which estimated that in October 2023, during the post-harvest period, there were 13.1 million people experiencing IPC/CH Phase 3 and above conditions, including 2.5 million in IPC/CH Phase 4. These are levels comparable to the pre-Taliban takeover and constitute a marginal improvement in the overall food insecurity situation, which still affects around one third of the population.

Favourable climate conditions in 2022/23 resulted in improved cereal crop harvest combined with a gradual increase in the availability and access to seasonal livelihood opportunities. This has led to a gradual stabilisation in market prices, accompanied by a continued appreciation of the local currency Afghani (AFN) against major foreign currencies. Concurrently, the massive scale-up of life-saving humanitarian assistance at the peak of the crisis in 2021 and 2022 underpin the significant improvements in the food security situation.

Despite this positive trend, food insecurity in Afghanistan remains alarmingly high and the country is ranked amongst the top three food crisis countries globally according to the latest Global Report on Food Crises. The drivers behind food insecurity in Afghanistan persist. The political instability following the Taliban takeover (De Facto Authority – DFA) in August 2021 resulted in the reinforcement of international sanctions, freezing of the international foreign currency reserves and suspension of international development aid. Consequently, Afghanistan went through a two-year-long GDP contraction of about 30-35%, leading to heightened inflation and concurrent market price volatility, substantial decline in formal and informal labour markets, loss of income and household purchasing power, further entrenching the pre-existing vulnerabilities and culminating in a record-high humanitarian crisis. The situation was further compounded by the DFA ban on women participation in the workforce in December 2022, exposing the majority of affected households to heightened protection risks and pushing them further into the adoption of degrading coping strategies.

All this is compounded by the structural challenges faced by the country, which range from chronic poverty, armed conflict, recurrent and extreme forms of natural hazards – e.g., earthquakes, floods -, a three-year-long below average harvest due to continued drought from 2018/19 to 2022, etc. - as well the secondary effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Food insecurity forecast

Around 15.8 million (36%) are projected to be in high levels of acute food (IPC/CH Phase 3 and above) from November 2023 to March 2024. However, the food insecurity forecast for 2024 is increasingly unpredictable. The initial projection of a favourable winter crop and increased pasture availability due to the foreseen El Niño climate phenomenon might not materialise as initially anticipated. Normal to below normal precipitation is expected to impact heavily on the winter crop output and general

livestock conditions. Close monitoring of the El Niño effect continues.

Multiple fragilities prevail. At the macroeconomic level, Afghanistan remains heavily dependent on the limited external assistance and lacks sufficient capacity for meaningful revenue generation. Half of the population suffers from chronic poverty and is highly exposed to the seasonal impacts of recurrent natural hazards. This is compounded by the impact of the Herat Earthquakes in October 2023 and the forced expulsion of Afghan population from Pakistan. The most recent IPC/CH analysis points at the growing financial strain at household level due to reduced income as a result of high rates of unemployment, the reduction in economic activities post-Taliban takeover and risks possible reduction in remittances especially from Iran.

Crucial to the overall food security analysis is the looming impact of the ban on opium production on household economy, particularly on small and medium scale farmers who depend on it as the main source of income. According to a report by the consultancy firm Alcis⁵, around 85% of cultivated area is affected, although most of it is replaced by wheat and cotton crops.

Overview of DG ECHO and EU response

- In 2023, DG ECHO allocated a total EUR 159.1 million out of which around one third of the funding has been allocated to food assistance. The EU is an important player in Afghanistan, as it is one of the very few donors who has maintained a physical presence in the country. The DG ECHO field office never interrupted its activities and continues to carry out monitoring missions across the country.
- The lack of food remains the biggest humanitarian problem in Afghanistan, with 15.8 million people being acutely food insecure. The HIP 2024 allocates EUR 113 million to support a multi-sectoral humanitarian response. Selection of proposals is still ongoing. Humanitarian food and nutritional assistance will be one of the most important areas funded.
- At the end of 2023, 45.5% of the USD 3,2 billion of the UN's Humanitarian Response Plan was received, compared to 75% funded by the end of 2022. Emergency shelter and NFI (non-food items), Education and WASH received the lowest funding compared to other sectors in 2023.
- In 2023, the Food Security and Agriculture Sector, requiring USD 1.57 billion has received USD 780 million (43%) of the required budget.

Key recommendations and policy and advocacy messages

- Because of the ban of women working for NGOs, advocating for the secure of physical and humanitarian access to all population in need without discrimination remains the major challenge for the delivery of humanitarian food assistance.
- To continue to scale-up the humanitarian response. USD 1.43 billion are needed in 2024 to assist 15.8 million people across Afghanistan with humanitarian food assistance and livelihoods support, particularly during the long winter months which coincide with the lean period. WFP needs USD 847 million to reach only 9.6 million people under the reprioritised plan.
- Alongside humanitarian food assistance, to continue to support smallholder farmers and herders in rural areas and destitute households in urban areas should remain a fundamental pillar of DG ECHO funding priorities in 2024.

⁵ [Geographic Information Services \(GIS\) | Alcis | United Kingdom](#)

3.4.2. Myanmar

Current situation and evolution since the last report

Since the military takeover three years ago, armed conflict has been expanding across the country with an increase in intensity, generating displacement and loss of productive assets and shelter.

According to the 2024 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP), 12.9 million people in Myanmar are in urgent need of humanitarian food assistance (nearly 25 % of the Myanmar population) with 23 % of the population in IPC/CH severity phase 3 (Crisis) and 4 % in phase 4 (Emergency). The 2024 HNRP requires USD 289 million to target 2.3 million people food and/ or emergency agriculture and livelihoods assistance.

The latest WFP-FAO joint food security and livelihood assessment (Round 7) shows that acceptable food consumption score decreased from 81% in September 2021 to 78% in August 2023. Chin, Kayah, and Rakhine regions experienced a higher prevalence of acute food insecurity compared to other areas.

As of January 2024, there were 2 587 100 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Myanmar. This includes approximately 700 000 persons displaced between October 2023 and January 2024 as a result of the dramatic degradation of the security situation, which has led to a sharp acceleration of displacements, with no positive outlook in the foreseeable future. Food consumption gaps are pronounced among displaced population, non-displaced stateless Rohingya (some 447 000 Rohingya in confined villages in Rakhine state), as well as female-headed households.

The food crisis is particularly driven by a reduction in production, with 24 % of farmers affected by conflict having reduced the area planted. 71 % of farmers affected by cyclone Mocha in May 2023 have also reported production difficulties.

In addition to armed conflicts, displacement, and cyclone Mocha, economic drivers (poverty, debt, and inflation) are also associated with food insecurity. This situation is further compounded by a shortage in commercial supplies as a result of roads being blocked by the parties to conflict, along with fuel shortages.

The WFP Market Price Update of December 2023 confirmed the rising trend in food prices with the following year-on-year average price increases: rice +89%, palm oil +74%, mixed oil +75%, chickpeas +68%, basic food basket +80% (a change from about USD12 to USD 21.60), onions +125%, tomatoes +56% and eggs +60%.

Moreover, the WFP's November 2023 Food Security Update highlighted a significant decline in the value of the Myanmar kyat, with a depreciation of 40% compared to the months preceding the military takeover. Additionally, the Asia Development Bank projected inflation rates of 14% for 2023 and 8.2% for 2024. Despite a recent increase in the minimum daily wage, its value remains relatively low, equivalent to approximately USD 1.80 per day at the current exchange rate.

Food insecurity forecast

The food security outlook for the coming months is grim, with agricultural production diminished due to various factors including conflict, displacement, and natural disasters. Staple food items are becoming increasingly unaffordable since the escalation in fighting in late October 2023 as many domestic and cross-border transport routes have been cut, while markets and nutritious food are likely to become less accessible, heightening the risk of widespread undernutrition.

Landmine contamination in farming areas poses a significant threat to agricultural activities such as farming and animal husbandry. This not only endangers lives but also disrupts food production. Climate change, natural disasters, and extreme weather events further jeopardize crop yields and agriculture, potentially exacerbated in 2024 by a lower-than-average rainfall in an El Niño year.

Overview of DG ECHO and EU response

- EUR 19.5 are allocated under the HIP 2024 to support a multi-sectoral humanitarian response in Myanmar. Considering the critical food security needs in the country, more than 10% of the funding has been allocated to provide urgent humanitarian food assistance.

The EU is one of the eight donors funding the Livelihoods and Food Security Fund (LIFT) programme, which aims to strengthen the resilience and sustainable livelihoods of poor households in Myanmar by helping people reach their full economic potential.

Key recommendations and policy/advocacy messages

- There is an urgent need to guarantee the uninterrupted flow of humanitarian assistance, including food assistance, but also the resumption of commercial supplies as most of the assistance is cash-based, where markets functionality is key.
- Donors must advocate for the respect of core humanitarian principles, including neutrality and impartiality, so that aid in armed conflict areas reaches those most in need regardless of who controls those areas.
- The nature of the conflict in Myanmar is protracted, which reinforces the need for a closer collaboration between humanitarian and development actors to ensure the humanitarian-nexus continuum.

3.4.3. Pakistan

Current Situation and evolution from last report

The 2023 Global Report on Food Crises ranks Pakistan in the 10th position of food insecure countries globally. In its November 2023 to April 2024 food security outlook, the WFP-FAO Hunger Hotspots report classified Pakistan as a hotspot of very high concern, needing urgent action to avert extreme hunger or death.

The country is still reeling from the impact of the catastrophic floods during the 2022 monsoon season. The flooding affected 33 million people in almost one third of the country. The flooding came against the backdrop of important political uncertainties, a two-year macroeconomic deterioration with the unsustainable expansion of the fiscal and current-account deficit driven by the prolonged impact of COVID-19, and the ripple effects of the war in Ukraine.

The situation is compounded by the ongoing economic deterioration, with Pakistan experiencing one of the worst economic crises in its history. In just a year, the Pakistani Rupee has depreciated by more than 20% against the US dollar, foreign currency reserves are precariously low while inflation trends have remained at elevated levels since November 2021, peaking strongly in 2023.

The multidimensional crisis comes on top of the underlying structural poverty, complex political and governance challenges, significant wealth inequalities, deep-seated and worrying levels of child and maternal nutrition insecurity coupled with challenging availability and access to basic services.

The latest IPC/CH analysis of April 2023 carried out in 43 districts of Sindh, Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces projected the worsening of the food security situation, with 11.8 million people (up from 10.57 million in the April-October 2023 period) experiencing high levels of acute food insecurity between November 2023 and January 2024, representing around 32% of the population analysed. Household food consumption patterns are severely compromised as the majority of households have lost their livelihoods, while coping capacities are at heightened risk of continued

decimation.

Concurrently, the last IPC/CH acute malnutrition analysis covering the March 2023-January 2024 period found that, in parts of Pakistan, 2.14 million children under five years were suffering from acute malnutrition and required urgent and specific nutrition support.

The World Bank reports a 5% increase in poverty rates (34.2% to 39.4%) in Pakistan between 2022 and 2023, which adds 12.5 million persons to those living below 3.65 USD/capita/day. This brings the total population below poverty to 95 million nationally.

Food insecurity forecast

The absence of substantive macroeconomic and political stabilization, combined with diminishing donor interest, the effects of the impending lean season in 2024 and the continued exposure to natural hazards, will certainly deepen the food security fragilities in the coming months. The critical food security conditions will further entrench the poor food consumption patterns and deepen the gravity of the worrying trends of acute undernutrition for over 2.14 million acutely malnourished children under 5 years in the crisis-affected areas. This dire situation is further deepened by the growing humanitarian consequences of the impact of climate change in the country that ranked as the 5th most vulnerable country impacted by climate change.

Overview of DG ECHO and EU response

- Unfortunately, despite the damning evidence of the grave food security situation, funding trends have suddenly dipped following the massive support in 2022/23. The funding outlook for 2024 and beyond is extremely bleak.
- According to OCHA, the Food Security and Agriculture Working Group (FSAWG) reports a funding gap of USD 58.8 million or 56% for the food assistance and agriculture sectors at the end of 2023. WFP reached 4 million people with food and cash by the end of its flood response. Due to funding constraints, WFP scaled down its assistance from April 2023 onward, reducing support from 1 million individuals per month to 309,400 people by December 2023.
- For the HIP 2024, DG-ECHO allocated EUR 4 million, for humanitarian assistance and 4 million under the Disaster Preparedness budget line. This is not sufficient to cover the whole range of growing multi-sectoral needs including food insecurity. With reduced resourcing, DG ECHO does not foresee meaningful coverage of the food insecure communities in IPC 3 and 4 regions.
- The Government of Pakistan faces the challenge of financing the post-floods recovery. The Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) estimates that over USD 16 billion will be required for reconstruction over the next 3 to 5 years (about 5% of GDP). A 'Resilient Recovery, Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Framework' (4RF) is being developed with assistance from the World Bank, the UNDP, the Asia Development Bank, and the EU.

Key recommendations and policy/advocacy messages

- There is an urgent need to scale-up life saving emergency support to tackle and prevent the worsening trends of acute food insecurity amongst the crisis-affected communities in Pakistan.
- DG ECHO should explore the capacity and scope of enhanced shock responsiveness in coordination with other donors and within the current Disaster Preparedness country strategy. Context, market functionalities, and access are conducive for an at-scale use of multi-purpose cash to meet food and other basic needs of affected populations.

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